

**15010**

**SUBJECT** Interrogation and Sentencing of Prisoners

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SUPPLEMENT TO  
REPORT NO.

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION FOR THE RESEARCH  
USE OF TRAINED INTELLIGENCE ANALYSTS.

1. Q. Tell me about your arrest. What was the first prison like?

A. When I reached Russia [ ] I was arrested by the NKVD. They took me to a prison. There is usually not more than one year between arrest and sentencing. In this one year, the Russian prison is so strong, so primitive, that it destroys you physically and psychologically. In a Russian prison the hygiene is so primitive, and there is so much hunger, that within a very short time the prisoner changes from a man into an animal. After a few months in the prison you think about nothing but your own life—only food. There is a great release in your physical condition, for in a room of about 12 x 14 ft there are 44 people. There is no comfort at all. The prisoners lie on the floor and the food is so bad that there is always hunger. During this time there is frequent interrogation, especially during the night. In the prison the political and criminal prisoners are together.

8. Q. What percentage of the prisoners is political, and what percentage is criminal?

A. In 1937, after the Tretyaki campaign, 70% were political prisoners, and in 1940 60% were political prisoners, mostly from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. During the interrogation you are charged with your paragraph, and if the NKVD does not get good information from you, you are sent into solitary confinement. I was not beaten by the NKVD, but the other prisoners in my cell came back in the morning black and blue.

3. Q. Do they use any other forms of torture?

A. I don't know. I was not beaten myself, and the other prisoners would not talk about it. In this prison you spend no longer than a year. When the interrogation is finished you get the sentence through the Troika; that is, the NKVD Court. This Troika consists of three soldiers—one officer and two sergeants. The determination of the sentence takes only two minutes. You

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can sign your name to it or you cannot; it makes no difference. You cannot say anything or ask any questions. When I was there, a thousand people got sentenced in one day. My sentence was three years at slave labor for violation of Paragraph 18, which is illegal entry into the country. This was in Starobelsk, near Krakov. One is usually happy to go to the camp, for there at least one can work and be in the fresh air. Especially for specialists, it is better to go to the camp. In every city there is a prisoner slave labor camp. The big criminal and big political prisoners are sent to the prison camps outside Russia proper: North Arctic, Kamchatka, Sakhalin, and the 160th camp in Murmansk. In 1941 the camp at Murmansk was eliminated because the railroad there was finished.

4. Q. Are the camps in the Far East considered worse than those in Europe?
  - A. No, they are the same.
5. Q. I understand that everyone arrested is first put in a prison in the area where he is arrested, and stays there for about a year. During that time the prisoner is subject to constant interrogation. During that interrogation, does the NKVD try to get confessions?
  - A. Yes. An old friend of mine, a veterinarian, was accused because many horses in his enterprise died. They called it economic agitation against the Soviet. He was interrogated for six days by many officers. He did not confess, but on the seventh day he fell asleep in the room where they were interrogating him. When he woke up he found that he had signed a confession.
6. Q. Do they always try to get their prisoners to sign confessions?
  - A. All the time.
7. Q. And if they don't sign?
  - A. It doesn't make any difference.
8. Q. Do they ever give sentences for less than one year—for instance, six months, or three months?
  - A. The minimum is three years.
9. Q. Is that for both political and criminal prisoners?
  - A. Political prisoners never get three years. Political prisoners mostly get from five to ten years, generally ten years.
10. Q. Are political prisoners ever tried in open courts?
  - A. Usually not.
11. Q. Are the political prisoners always told what the charges against them are?
  - A. Yes, yes.
12. Q. But they never have any chance to get witnesses in their behalf?
  - A. Not before the Troika—and they have no appeal, except after six months in camp. Then they can apply to the camp commander for mercy.

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